

A review of **Children's Parliament** work 2012–15



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In support of the development of the CYPSC Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, Children's Parliament has undertaken a review of our work (completed projects, consultations or programmes only) from January 2012 to October 2015 to identify key messages and common themes from children across Scotland.

This body of work includes 16 completed projects, consultations and programmes across 16 local authorities. Through this work, Children's Parliament engaged with 3,229 children between the ages of four and 16.



Key messages

We must give children's voices prominence and value

Children have capacity to reflect on complex issues. They can articulate what they need to flourish and grow, they recognise which needs are and must be rights, and they can identify some of the barriers to the realisation of rights and what actions might mitigate these obstacles. The challenge for the Scottish Government and public bodies with interests and responsibilities in the promotion of children's rights and wellbeing is to give these voices prominence and value.

We need to create opportunities for children to engage directly in dialogue with adults with power and influence

Children are keen to explore their lives and the lives of others. They are curious and have capacity to provide insight to those with responsibility for the design, development and implementation of services, policy/guidance and legislation. The work described in this report evidences that children's voices have most impact when adults who make strategic decisions engage directly with children rather than when other adults mediate the messages.

There are children in Scotland for whom basic needs are not met and we must address poverty.

Some children are not having basic needs and rights met – enough to eat, a healthy diet, a safe, warm and permanent home environment. A common theme across Children's Parliament programmes and projects is children worrying about their family not having enough money to buy food and pay bills. They know this is upsetting and stressful for their parents. Not having enough money can stop children doing activities or taking part in things organised by school or in the community. There is a plethora of evidence about the impact of poverty on children and family life, all of which points to the need to address this explicitly and relentlessly when it comes to action on child rights.

Our focus needs to be on relationships

When Children's Parliament engages with children we spend time talking about what children need to be healthy, happy and safe and we recognise the role of rights and the intuitive idea of human dignity. This helps children understand their own rights and the rights of others. When children talk about rights they are essentially talking about relationships – between children, children and adults, and adults. Making rights real is about putting in place the relationships children want and need.

We need to focus on family life as much as the public life of the child

The UNCRC emphasises the importance of family life and the role of parents and carers. Family life is often considered to be a private space, and there may be a reticence to talk about it in terms of children's human rights. Children like to talk about family life and confirm the value of reflecting on and exploring what rights mean in the context of family relationships. Children's Parliament projects also confirm that parents need access to learning opportunities of their own, and as co-educators to resources which help them to facilitate their child's learning about rights.

Learning about rights must be child-focused, inclusive and relevant

Children's Parliament projects and programmes evidence the importance of learning about rights as an exploration of our world, with a commitment to inclusive approaches, genuine participation, mutual respect and honesty. In this model: teaching is not didactic, rather adults are facilitators; learning is about relationships, not about a Convention's articles; it is not overly

focused on rights violations experienced by children in other countries (however important). Rather, it is about exploring children's lives in the community, school and at home in Scotland today.

We must frame early intervention and prevention as rights-based approaches

Early intervention and prevention are our professional and moral responsibility. We do not label children by intervening and supporting them early; rather, we are taking active steps to ensure their freedom from the burden of inequality and exclusion. Early intervention and prevention build resilience and provide support when it is needed and before difficulties become entrenched.

We must give importance to children's mental health

Emotional/mental wellbeing is at the heart of realising one's rights; when children feel positive about themselves, their abilities and futures they are more likely to engage positively with the world around them. They are also more likely to be aware of their emotions and manage them, cope with uncertainty and recover from adversity.

There is more to do to embed rights in school and learning

Efforts are made across schools to support learning about rights and encourage children's participation in learning. Children like to and want to talk about their learning, they have an understanding of their learning strengths and what support they need. However, support for learning is not always adequate or available. Children know they have 'a right to an education' but for many there are not enough opportunities to talk about what the experience of learning and going to school should be like. Often, children do not feel that they are engaged in planning or leading their learning. This would suggest that more can be done to support schools to further the realisation of rights across learning.

Adults need a better understanding of their responsibilities as duty bearers

Too often children experience rights only with the permission of an adult. Sometimes this is filtered through the prism of rights coming with responsibilities, or a pretence that a child lacks understanding or capacity, as if rights are in the gift of the adult. There is a need to increase understanding in adults – from government and public bodies to teachers and parents/carers – that they are duty bearers and that as such they have an obligation to respect, promote and realise children's human rights and to abstain from human rights violations. However we frame this, as adult learning or training or continuing professional development, children (particularly younger children and those in middle childhood) need adults to understand and fulfil their responsibilities.

Children should have support and opportunities to understand and influence their communities

Children have views on the design and management of their community but are rarely engaged in planning or decision-making processes. Children care deeply about the local and global environment and want to have a say about both.

As duty bearers, we need to address children's key concerns

Across Children's Parliament's engagement with children a number of topics arise again and again. This would suggest that responses to date, whether from individuals or agencies, have not been adequate and have to improve. These key concerns are: bullying, adults shouting, adult's drinking/ alcohol, adults arguing/violence, parents/family splitting up and not seeing enough of dad.

We must improve the experience of public services for children

Children are important users of public services. They want to be spoken to directly, they want to be involved in decisions that impact on them personally and collectively. When they use a public

service children want the staff to have respect for them and be able to communicate confidently with them. Public buildings and spaces should be child-friendly and welcoming of children. More can be done to facilitate the interface and dialogue between children and public service providers.

There is a need to translate empathy and engagement into action

When adults hear powerful messages from children they are often moved but do not necessarily know what to do. Adult empathy for children's lived experience is welcome, but achieves little in itself, only actions will solve problems and improve outcomes. Enabling and listening to children's voices and their lived experience is a start – translating concerns and needs into action is the duty bearer's responsibility. There is a role for agencies whose experience and purpose is in the promotion of children's human rights to offer support to public bodies to help them to reflect on what children tell them and what actions should result.

We must make children's rights law

Across many Children's Parliament programmes, children express the view that their rights should be enshrined in law, that adults and institutions should not be able to choose when a right is respected/realised. Children understand that some rights are in law, but that this is piecemeal and somewhat complex to understand.

The pages which follow describe learning from the following Children's Parliament work, delivered and completed between January 2012 and October 2015.

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StreetsAhead

Location: Glasgow
Number of children: 200
Project date: 2011-2012



Project description: StreetAhead

Children shared their views and experiences of growing up in the East End of Glasgow and explored what their communities need to be healthy, happy and safe. The project was commissioned by the Violence Reduction Unit and the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence. School-based workshops involved 200 children, 20 of whom then attended a week-long mural and DVD project. The work drew on the role of mothers in US-based responses to community/gang violence by exploring what insight, in this case, children could bring to some of the challenges being faced by local communities, specifically whether children can be the moral voice of a community. Additional funding and/or support came from Glasgow City Council, Scottish Government and Network for Social Change.

Key themes: community, safety, alcohol/drugs, violence

Key issues/learning:

- Children have the capacity to reflect on and discuss issues which are complex and often difficult to hear. While adults intuitively want to protect children from behaviours or experiences that might harm them – violence or exposure to alcohol or drugs, these can be the reality for many children and they benefit from opportunities to share and articulate their experiences.
- Children have the capacity and honesty to identify and reflect on community problems but do not feel defined by them. With appropriate approaches and time, they balance concerns with optimism and aspiration.
- Children were unanimous and explicit that violence in the community and at home is driven and exacerbated by alcohol use.
- Children are exposed to alcohol use in public places – when they pass adults who are inebriated outside a pub on their way to school or young people or adults drinking alcohol in parks and in the streets at any time of day.
- Alcohol is a key element of arguing and violence at home.
- Responses to the project from local adults evidenced that we have made little progress in Scotland in recognising and responding to alcohol harm.
- Fear of violence in public places stops children going out to play.
- Community Centres, Family Centres and local programmes provide children and families with safe places to meet and play.
- When adults hear powerful messages from children, for example about alcohol harm, they are moved but do not necessarily know what to do.

Please contact info@childrensparliament.org.uk if you wish to view a copy of the children's StreetsAhead DVD.

Me + Us

Location: Edinburgh, West Lothian, Midlothian, Aberdeen, South Lanarkshire, Western Isles

Number of children: 60

Project date: 2012-2013



Project description: Me + Us

Children worked in Local Investigation Teams to explore cultural identity, heritage and belonging. This project was funded by the Scottish Government Community Safety Unit (Anti-Sectarianism team) with the aim to understand sectarianism from the perspective of younger children.

Key themes: identity, heritage, belonging, prejudice/bigotry, anti-sectarianism

Key issues/learning:

- Ignorance and prejudice are learned.
- Children are keen to explore what being Scottish means in contemporary society.
- It is not inevitable that children will adopt negative adult values or behaviours – by pulling back from a particular issue (for example violence, racism, homophobia or sectarianism) and addressing underlying themes of identity and belonging children learn positive values and challenge prejudice and hate.
- A commitment to early intervention and prevention of inequality and discrimination means starting with inclusive values-based learning in childhood.
- We must remember that when a child receives different messages about equality and inclusion at home/in the community compared to those from school this might be confusing and difficult to understand.
- Children have capacity to talk about and understand discrimination and a range of 'isms' – but for this to be about learning (and not just another space where you are told what to think), they must be free to share what they have learned and heard elsewhere in a safe, supportive environment.
- Children understanding the impact of bullying and that they can have a positive influence by not being a passive or complicit bystander.
- By exploring identity, belonging and the idea of human dignity, children develop empathy for others.

A Consultation with Children on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill

Location: Angus, Edinburgh, Fife, Stirling, West Lothian, Glasgow

Number of children: 107

Project date: 2013



Project description: A Consultation with Children on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill

This consultation gathered children's views on what they needed in life to be healthy, happy and safe and the role of adults in ensuring that their needs were met. Specific elements of the Bill were explored including the definition of wellbeing, the role of Named Person, Child's Plan and improving Foster Care. This consultation was funded by Scottish Government and the work was submitted as CP's consultation response.

Key themes: rights, wellbeing, Children and Young People Act

Key issues/learning:

Children want the Scottish Government to understand more about children's lives and what it means for them to have their rights. They said that the Scottish Government needs to know what children's rights are, to implement the UNCRC as well as help all adults in Scotland understand children's rights. They said that it is the Government's job to make sure that children in Scotland are treated well and not stereotyped as trouble. The Government should make sure that children and young people learn about and understand politics.

Children identified barriers to good lives and the realisation of rights:

- Children don't like shouting and violence. Bullying is viewed as too common an experience and it takes away a person's confidence, leaves them feeling alone and without their rights.
- Children identified child poverty as the most important barrier to a good life. Some say they worry that their family does not have enough money to buy what they need.
- Children worry about their parents splitting up.
- Adults not listening, thinking children don't understand or don't have something to say.

Children recognised that the role of **Named Person** will be challenging. To make it work children identified characteristics required, but the key elements were: to be a kind person; to make a commitment to get to know and understand the child's views; to act quickly and to deliver promises; to be on your side; to watch over the child, fight for their rights and make sure they are growing up to be healthy, happy and safe. They also expressed concerns that this role will be difficult if the named person is busy or does not have time, if they are impatient, if they do not spend time directly with the child, or cannot stop arguments. Finally they recognised '*Everyone is so individual it would be difficult to look after everyone*'.

A **Child's Plan** should ensure it has the child's own views at the centre and it should change as the child grows and his/her needs change. Adults should pay attention to it and keep their promises to children.

Foster care can be improved by helping children understand why they are in care, by keeping siblings together, by introducing children and foster carers before being placed, by allowing and helping children to keep in touch with their birth family and friends. Children need to be able to build trust with their foster carer. Foster carers should get training that helps them be the best they can be.

Community Programmes (Glasgow and Fife)

Location: Glasgow and Fife

Number of children: 1,588

Project date: 2012 - 2015



Project description: Community Programmes (Glasgow and Fife)

Glasgow: From 2012 to 2015 Children's Parliament was part of the UK-wide Realising Ambition Lottery Funded programme, delivering an evidence-based programme to reduce the likelihood of young people offending.

Fife: From 2012 and 2014 Children's parliament received funding from Fife Council to continue our long-standing relationship with them. This programme replicated the work piloted in Glasgow.

Key elements of the Community Programmes included training for teachers, whole-class workshops and referral based arts programme designed to support identified children to develop their life skills, build their aspirations for the future and develop their sense of wellbeing. The programme evidenced 3 key outcomes for participants: improved peer relationships; increased emotional wellbeing; and increased engagement in learning.

Key themes: wellbeing, aspirations, early intervention and prevention

Key issues/learning:

- Early intervention and prevention of escalation builds resilience and provides support before crisis happens or deepens.
- It is possible to avert the disconnection and disengagement from learning and from school that is evident at the start of some young lives; a failure to act can result in a life marked by anti-social behaviour and offending.
- Early intervention is our professional and moral responsibility and we understand the markers of future alienation. We are not labelling children by intervening and supporting them early; rather, we are taking active steps to ensure their freedom from the burden of inequality and exclusion.
- Engagement with school and learning is essential to improving outcomes for children.
- Emotional/mental wellbeing is at the heart of realising one's rights; when children feel positive about themselves, their abilities and futures they are more likely to engage positively with the world around them. They are also more likely to be aware of their emotions and manage them, cope with uncertainty and recover from adversity.
- To improve experiences and outcomes for children we need to influence the adults around them – shifting judgemental, negative and limiting interpretations to views and behaviours that are caring, supportive and optimistic.
- Early intervention and prevention works.

Dad's Project

Location: Edinburgh, East Lothian, Aberdeen, Fife, Western Isles

Number of children: 50

Project date: 2013



Project description: Dad's Project

Children's Parliament facilitated the Dads Project to explore children's views on fatherhood and the role of father figures in their lives and to celebrate the role of dads in family life. In this project, a father figure could be a biological father but could also be another significant male carer. The profile of fathers and fatherhood has become more important on the policy agenda – The National Parenting Strategy, GIRFEC and our consideration of UNCRC implementation all mean we must consider more explicitly the importance of family life and the role of fathers. This project was funded by Awards for All.

Key themes: fatherhood, parenting, family life

Key issues/learning:

- Children enjoyed talking about family life. They understand that bringing up a family and providing what they need – emotional and practical things - can be both lots of fun and very difficult.
- Children identified that the best thing about being a dad included spending time and having fun with your child, feeling proud of your child, having a child you could talk to, seeing your child grow up and encouraging and giving advice to your child.
- Children recognised some challenges about being a dad which included: working too hard and not having enough time with your child, worries about keeping your child safe or concerns for their future, worries about having enough money for your family to buy food and pay bills, making the right decisions for your child and family and when you cannot be with your child because you live or work far away.
- While not true for all of the participating children, some ideas of gender-specific roles for mums and dads remain. Dads can sometimes be seen as providers, who work longer hours, who do less household tasks, and are the parent who takes part in more active/outdoors play, while other roles are attributed to mums.
- For children who do not live with their dads, or who live with dad a minority of the time, there is a sense of missing him and wanting him to be more present in their lives.

Leaders of Learning

Location: South Lanarkshire, Stirling, Midlothian

Number of children: 56

Project date: 2014



Project description: Leaders of Learning

Leaders of Learning was an exploration of children and young people's experiences of learning, both in and out of school, and how they can be included in the planning and delivery of learning as outlined by Curriculum for Excellence. Other agencies also participated in the project, delivering other aspects: Young Scot, SYP and Children in Scotland. This project was funded by Scottish Government.

Key themes: school, learning, Curriculum for Excellence, teaching

Key issues/learning:

- Children value their learning and like to go to school.
- Children like to and want to talk about their learning, they have an understanding of their learning strengths and what support they need.
- Children know they have 'a right to an education' but there are not enough opportunities to talk about what the experience of learning and going to school should be like.
- Relationships are central to learning and many children have positive relationships with their teachers.
- Children understood the commitment in Curriculum for Excellence to a broad general education as meaning they would learn about skills for life, these would help them get a job, and that they would be able to study a wide range of subjects.
- Children did not feel that they were engaged in planning or leading their learning enough. They felt some sense of control in terms of doing work on their own, finishing it when they wanted to, or making a choice about which activity to do. They did not report involvement in deciding on what they learned or how it was organised or facilitated.
- For some children learning can feel unchallenging or repetitive.
- They recognise the importance of the learning space which needs to be relaxed, quiet when you need quiet, and able to facilitate individual learning or working cooperatively in groups.
- Children want to use more technology when they learn.
- As well as teachers, parents, coaches, grandparents and friends also support learning.
- Barriers to learning include problems or stress at home, interruptions in class (including bad behaviour), health conditions, bullying and not feeling motivated.
- Children like when wider achievements are also valued and recognised – such as doing well in sports, hobbies or community activities.
- Children expressed a strong desire to be more involved and felt they should have a chance to share their opinions about how and what they are learning in school.

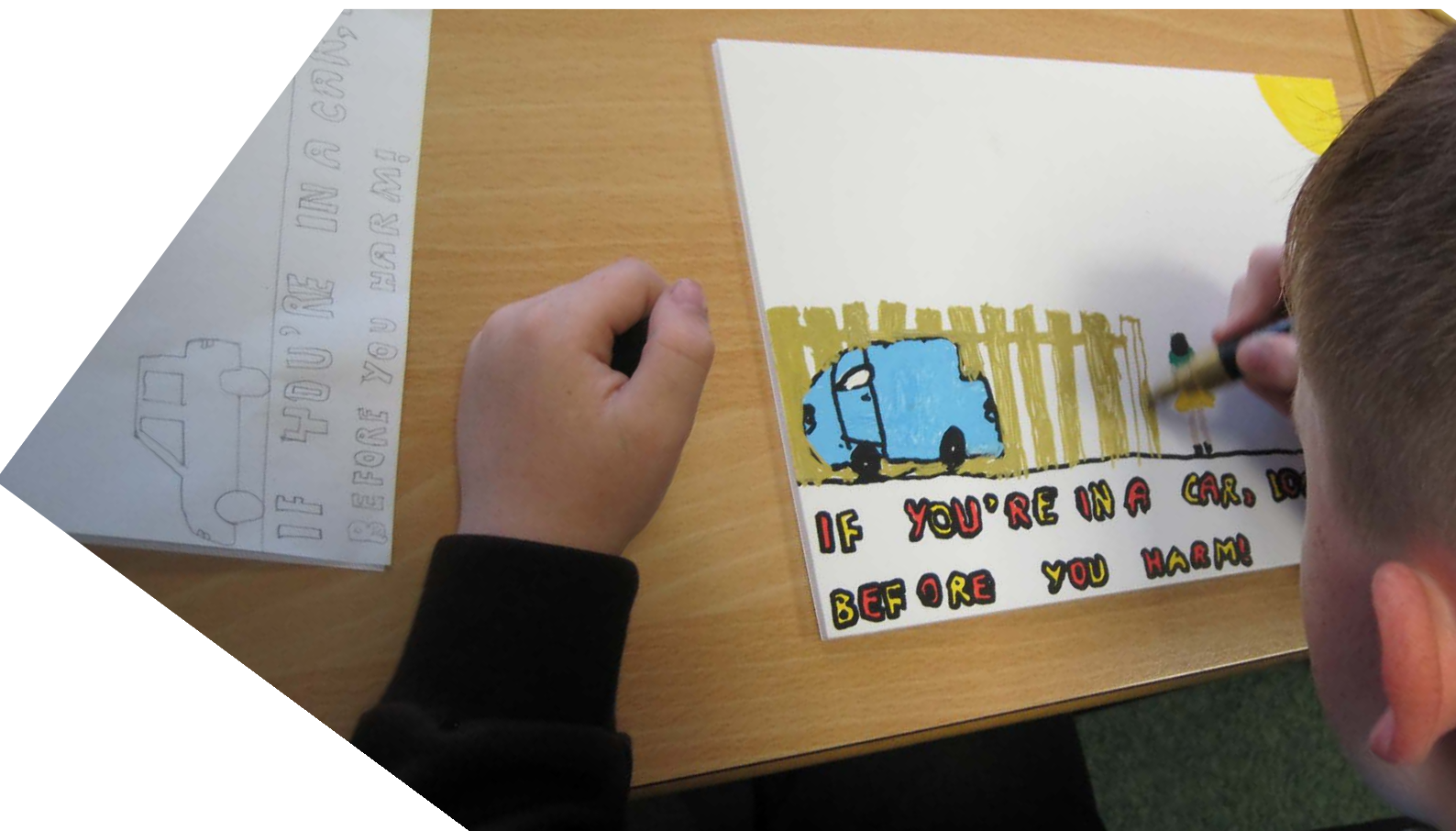
Home Free

Location: Edinburgh, Perth and Kinross, Dundee, Inverclyde, Scottish Borders

Number of children: 232

Project date: 2014

Stay Safe
And Keep rules
Find someone you trust
Everyone should be safe



Project description: Home Free

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has a long tradition of public service advertising campaigns which include efforts to increase safety in the home. This matters because accidents and unintentional injuries in the home remain one of the main causes of hospital admissions and deaths of children. Building on this legacy of work, Children's Parliament engaged children in discussion about safety at home. Children talked about personal experiences and how best to keep children safe and they designed their own public service ads.

Key themes: safety, family life, wellbeing

Key issues/learning:

- Children understand and agree with their right to be safe at home.
- Children want to learn about how to keep themselves safe at home but recognise that adults have a duty to keep them safe.
- While the focus of the work was on unintentional injuries, discussion of safety at home also meant some children recognised that they can feel or be unsafe because of the adults at home. Children identified they need to know who they can talk to when they feel unsafe.
- While the majority of children reported having an accident at some point, many of them felt that these accidents could have been avoided. Children felt that accidents could be prevented by having the right safety equipment (e.g. wearing helmets on bikes or scooters and nets around trampolines), by concentrating more, taking more time, not taking so many risks, and being taught how to stay safe.
- When it comes to learning about safety at home children said that these adults have a role to play: parents and carers, teachers, emergency services (police, firefighters and health professionals). Older brothers and sisters can also help.

Moving On Up

Location: Renfrew

Number of children: 130

Project date: 2014



Project description: Moving On Up

Moving On Up was a collaborative project which saw CP work with Creative Artworks Scotland, Our Place Youth Project and Renfrewshire Council. Children had their say about what they need to support them in the transition from primary to secondary school. The project was funded by Renfrewshire Council.

Key themes: education, learning, transition

Key issues/learning:

- When children are supported and able to articulate their feelings it is possible to address and relieve worry and stress about the transition from primary to secondary school.
- Learning and expressing empathy for others is a necessary part of developing an understanding of rights – your own and those of others.
- Friendships are essential in childhood and help ease the transition process.
- Children often have mixed emotions about transitioning up to secondary school – advice from older students who have experienced difficult changes can be very helpful and reassuring.
- The transition to secondary school can be full of unknowns and many children feel stress and anxiety during this time. Bullying and isolation can make this transition even more difficult.
- Adults have (and must understand their) responsibilities to keep children safe. A safe and supportive environment is essential in helping children be successful and happy in school.
- Adults need to be explicit in expressing that they care for and will support all children. Children ask that they have ‘a spotlight’ on bullying and promote respect between all people within the school.
- Learning new skills, grappling with new ideas and building strong relationships help make children more resilient and this resilience is key to managing change and the unknown.
- To fulfil the child’s right to an education, teachers and other school staff must provide an environment that children experience as safe and welcoming.
- Children have many hopes and dreams for their futures and they ask to be supported in realising them.

Children, Technology and Glow

Location: Renfrew

Number of children: 95

Project date: 2014



Project description: Children, Technology and Glow

When Scottish Government decided to launch a new version of Glow, Scotland's online community for learners and teachers, they undertook a Privacy Impact Assessment to look at the benefits of and areas of risk for the resource. Children's Parliament facilitated a consultation with children looking at children's rights, information and technology, and privacy and safety online.

Key themes: education, learning, technology, Glow

Key issues/learning:

- Children associate technology with having fun, learning and connecting with others. At the same time children feel a tension between using technology and doing other activities, like going outside and being active. They worry they might become "addicted" to technology.
- Children feel that technology is an important part of their lives and that it should be incorporated into more aspects of teaching and learning. Technology helps them develop new skills and learn new information.
- Children's confidence in Glow and the perceived value of what it has to offer appears to be linked to how embedded the use of Glow is in their class work.
- Children value the internet's ability to help them stay connected to the people in their lives. Children view Glow as being a safe and easy way for them to stay in contact with friends, classmates and teachers when they are not at school.
- Children say that learning is best when it is active and engaging. They use Glow in order to access games that help with their learning, such as practising maths and developing language skills.
- Children enjoy using Glow with the adults in their lives and being able to access Glow from home means they can share what they are doing in school with their parents or carers and involve adults in their learning.
- All children like using technology, but they have different views as to the amount of adult involvement or supervision they want. Younger children like using technology with their parents or carers so that they can be supported in accessing technology and older children appreciate feeling trusted to go online on their own. Children want adults to help them navigate technology so they feel safe, confident and capable.
- Children say that using technology is best when it is fun and feels safe. They want to learn how to use technology safely, but they can be scared off when they experience it negatively (like cyber bullying or seeing adult images) and when adults focus predominantly on the risks (like being approached by strangers or being asked for personal information).
- Children value their online privacy. They are protective of passwords and personal information and have concerns about information being available to strangers.
- Children say that My Site is where the majority of their use of Glow takes place, using it to connect with classmates and save private documents. Children's use of Office 365 differs. Children say they like being able to access Office 365 from home and note that this is particularly helpful for children who do not have similar computer programmes installed on their home computers. Children say they like being able to create their own personal documents at home, during the holidays and on weekends.
- Children are frustrated when they cannot always access Glow, such as when they forget passwords or there are errors when logging in.
- Children say that using Glow can be slow at times. Glow is often interrupted by having to log into multiple platforms once logged into Glow.

Children and Sport

Location: South Lanarkshire, West Lothian, Fife, Scottish Borders

Number of children: 96

Project date: 2014



Project description: Children and Sport

As the public consultation on the 'Giving Children and Young People a Sporting Chance: A Draft Strategy for Scotland' took place Children's Parliament were commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake direct engagement with children of primary school age. Children explored their experiences and aspirations about participating in sport.

Key themes: sport, play, physical activity, teaching, coaching

Key issues/learning:

- Being involved in sport should be fun and taking part with friends is important. For children, taking part in sports is often the same thing as playing.
- Children rely on adults in their families to support their sporting activities. They want adults to play sports with them, to cheer them on and to have fun too, along with logistical and monetary support.
- Great sporting opportunities for children are about friendship, learning, excitement, challenge, achievement and being fit and healthy.
- Children know adults worry about safety, but they want adults to understand that sometimes it is the excitement, danger or risk that make playing their sport attractive and appealing.
- For some children, great sporting opportunities mean being in competition; winning and losing is an important part of taking part. Children like to take part in tournaments as this allows them to meet new people and make new friends while competing.
- Children say that some things impact negatively on their sporting opportunities: the cost of taking part, dependence on overly busy adults, gender stereotyping, lack of opportunities for children with disabilities, having fewer or different opportunities because they are young, and adults who shout and take the fun out of sport.
- Adults who teach or coach sports should be kind, patient, calm, knowledgeable, experienced, and most importantly they should not shout at children taking part.
- Children want more PE at school. PE at school is best when children have a say about what they are doing and when specialist PE teachers or coaches are involved.
- Children like additional after school, lunchtime and weekend sports at school as well as community-based opportunities.
- Children say that facilities in primary schools need to be better. Children think that facilities in high schools are better because young people's PE and interests are taken more seriously.
- Children enjoy the opportunity to learn about and participate in new and different sports and physical activities, but when projects or initiatives end this is frustrating.
- Outdoor activity centres, which their whole class might visit, are exciting places where children can experience new sporting activities and physical challenges.
- Children say that sports clubs provide opportunities to have great teaching or coaching and to play a sport competitively. Being part of a club can take an interest or skill further than playing at school can.
- Costs associated with playing some sports can mean that their family has to make choices about which sports or the number of sports they can participate in. Children like schemes which provide free activities, this should include free access to sports and leisure centres.
- Children like to play and do sports in parks and want them to be clean and safe.
- Children say it is important that adults speak with them and ask them about their sporting experiences, opportunities and aspirations. Children want adults to come see them play sports and help them celebrate successes.

Mapping Our Future

Location: Glasgow, Fife, Stirling, Midlothian, Edinburgh

Number of children: 24

Project date: 2014



Project description: Mapping Our Future

Children's Parliament was approached by the Scottish Government's Strategy Unit to provide support around its Horizon Scanning programme, which explores a range of possible futures and how our world might be different by 2021. The Scottish Government has made a commitment to putting the views of children and young people at the heart of the Horizon Scanning process. The children met with key civil servants to share their experiences and their ideas for Scotland.

Key themes: play, school, learning, teaching, family life, parenting, relationships, community, environment, identity, jobs, aspirations

Key issues/learning:

- Children understand the notion of different but equal; they understand and want respect for themselves and for others. Creating and providing opportunities to work together to explore ideas of identity and belonging helps children understand their own rights and the rights of others.
- Poverty affects children day to day, in terms of practical things (like having enough food to eat, a house that is warm and having the necessities for life), but also because worrying about money is stressful for adults. Children see, hear and feel this worry and stress.
- All children want – for themselves and for other children – a home where there is love, safety, warmth, food, comforts.
- Children have views on the design and management of their community but are rarely engaged in planning or decisions. Children care deeply about the local and global environment and want to have a say about both.
- Children want to do well at school and thrive on opportunities to engage in learning that includes their views, helps them understand the purpose of what they do and the progress they are making. Children understand that some children need additional support and that enough support is not always available.
- Children have dreams, aspirations and ambitions for the future – but they feel that adults don't always ask or pay attention. Some adults make them feel they are not good enough or can't succeed.
- Children say that playing is the best thing about being a child. Playing is about learning, growing, experimenting, having fun, feeling free. Children know that how or where they play may be different from how adults remember their experiences. They want adults to play with them more.
- Beyond immediate family and teachers, children want other adults to understand children's rights and do their best for children. This includes sports coaches, health professionals and neighbours. All adults in a community should understand and realise they can support and care for children.
- With the right preparation and support, children are capable of discussing their needs and rights (and the needs and rights of others) with adults who make big, strategic decisions about Scotland. Adults can make this happen.

NHS Lothian Consultation on the Strategy for Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing

Location: Edinburgh, Midlothian, West Lothian, East Lothian

Number of children: 350

Project date: 2014



Project description: NHS Lothian Consultation on the Strategy for Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing

In 2013 NHS Lothian published a draft strategy for improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the four local authorities across the Lothians. NHS Lothian was committed to including the voices of children and young people in the consultation. To do so, NHS Lothian commissioned Children's Parliament to facilitate the consultation process, directly and by creating a toolkit (with training) to be used with other groups so their voices could be heard.

Key themes: health, wellbeing, NHS

Key issues/learning:

- Children value their health and wellbeing and they want to know how to and be able to look after themselves. In order to do so, they recognise that they need support and guidance from the adults in their lives – parents and carers, teachers, health professionals and others.
- Children want to be spoken to directly. NHS staff need to use their names, ask questions and engage with them as the patient, rather than talking primarily to their parents/carers. Children and young people want to understand what is being done to them and why.
- Children repeatedly stressed the importance of adults' tone of voice and manner of speaking, especially when they may already be nervous or scared.
- Children want to be involved in decisions. They ask that NHS staff listen respectfully to them and take their views seriously. Sometimes it can be uncomfortable or difficult for them to speak up, but it helps if NHS staff are patient and ready to pay attention.
- Children want to develop relationships. When possible, they would like to see the same doctor, dentist or nurse, and for them to take their time during appointments and treatments. They want to feel as though they are understood and that someone cares.
- Many children and young people have never been in a hospital or other NHS service before and they can feel worried or scared about being in such an unfamiliar environment. They ask that NHS staff acknowledge and empathise with this fear, and try to alleviate it.
- Because health services can often be unfamiliar environments, they ask that clinics, hospitals and waiting rooms be made more comfortable and child-friendly, including toys, books, posters and technology specifically for children and young people.
- Children can easily feel labelled by adults, as members of specific groups (e.g. LGBT young people, asylum seekers, children and young people in care, children and young people with mental health issues, etc.). They ask NHS staff to be non-judgemental and not have any preconceptions.
- Children recognise the role of technology in accessing health information. Some of them felt more comfortable with the anonymity of being able to search and ask questions online, while others were concerned about the quality of information available. They ask for a reliable, easy-to-access resource online for children and young people.
- Children discussed the experience of accessing services holistically. Each part of the experience – driving in the car or taxi or ambulance, waiting in reception, interactions with reception, assessment and treatment – is recalled in detail and is just a part of an overall experience. This is a reminder that all staff need to think about how they engage with children and young people and the impact they have on the individual's experience.

Embark!

Location: South Lanarkshire, Inverclyde, Edinburgh

Number of children: 105

Project date: 2014



Project description: Embark!

As part of the Read On Get On campaign, Save the Children commissioned Children's Parliament to facilitate a consultation with primary aged children about their experiences of and views on reading. The children explored why they enjoyed reading, what challenges they faced when reading, what and who could support them, and why reading is important.

Key themes: reading, literacy, education, aspirations, wellbeing

Key issues/learning:

- Children need time and space to practice and to be free to enjoy reading. There may be distractions or obligations at home and at school and some children are not able to focus on reading as much as they would like.
- Children value having a choice in what they read; they recognise that sometimes it is necessary to read an assigned book in school and that these experiences challenge them and introduce them to new ideas. However, their enjoyment of reading increases when they have the opportunity to select their own reading material.
- Children feel frustrated when they get stuck on words or when they don't understand the main concepts. Without adequate help and support from adults, this can negatively impact on their reading habits.
- For many children, the biggest challenges when reading are noise and distractions from classmates, friends and family. They feel frustrated and unfocused when they cannot get on with their reading because of outside interference.
- Children emphasise the importance of and pleasure in reading on their own, but they also enjoy being read to and sharing in the collective experience of hearing a story.
- Reading is a vehicle that allows children to travel to new places through the pages of a book. Children love the way reading can spark their imaginations and allow them to pretend to be someone or somewhere new. They also discuss reading as a temporary escape from things that might be upsetting or difficult in real life.
- Children made connections between reading now and success in the future. They see reading as an essential life skill that would impact upon their ability to do well in their education and to get a job when they were older. They also discussed reading as a cycle – it's good to read now because as adults they will read to their own children.
- Children frequently discuss pretending that they are in a story or putting themselves in the shoes of a main character. Reading provides an opportunity for children to explore a vast array of feelings, make connections to characters' experiences and develop a sense of empathy.
- For children to whom reading does not come easily, finding a particular story, genre or format that inspires them can deeply affect their feelings towards and habits of reading.
- Technology plays a role in developing children's literacy skills. Some children enjoy reading much more on a device, finding it cooler and more accessible than a book. Along with reading stories on devices, children use technology to play games that build vocabulary and improve spelling and to write their own stories.

Children and Young People's Understanding of Wellbeing

Location: Edinburgh, Glasgow

Number of children: 47

Project date: 2015

Happy, Healthy and Safe

Adolescent wellbeing, the views of 10 and 11 year olds

To make Scotland the best place to grow up and flourish children need:

- A family
 - To be cared for
 - Drinking water
- Warm, clean clothes
 - A warm bed
- A smoke-free home
 - Parents that help
 - Not to be alone
- A nice house that isn't crumbling around you
 - Enough sleep
- A chance to co-operate with others
 - Exercise and keeping fit
- A good education that teaches you lessons for life
 - Time to do your favourite subjects at school
 - Art
 - To play with friends
- To have boundaries so you know where you can go
 - To join things and not be left out
 - A mobile phone
 - Trips with family and friends
- To be part of the Christmas show
 - Not to talk to strangers
- To be with safe people in a safe home
 - To be streetwise
- To know your way around so you don't get lost.

But what can get in the way of wellbeing at home?

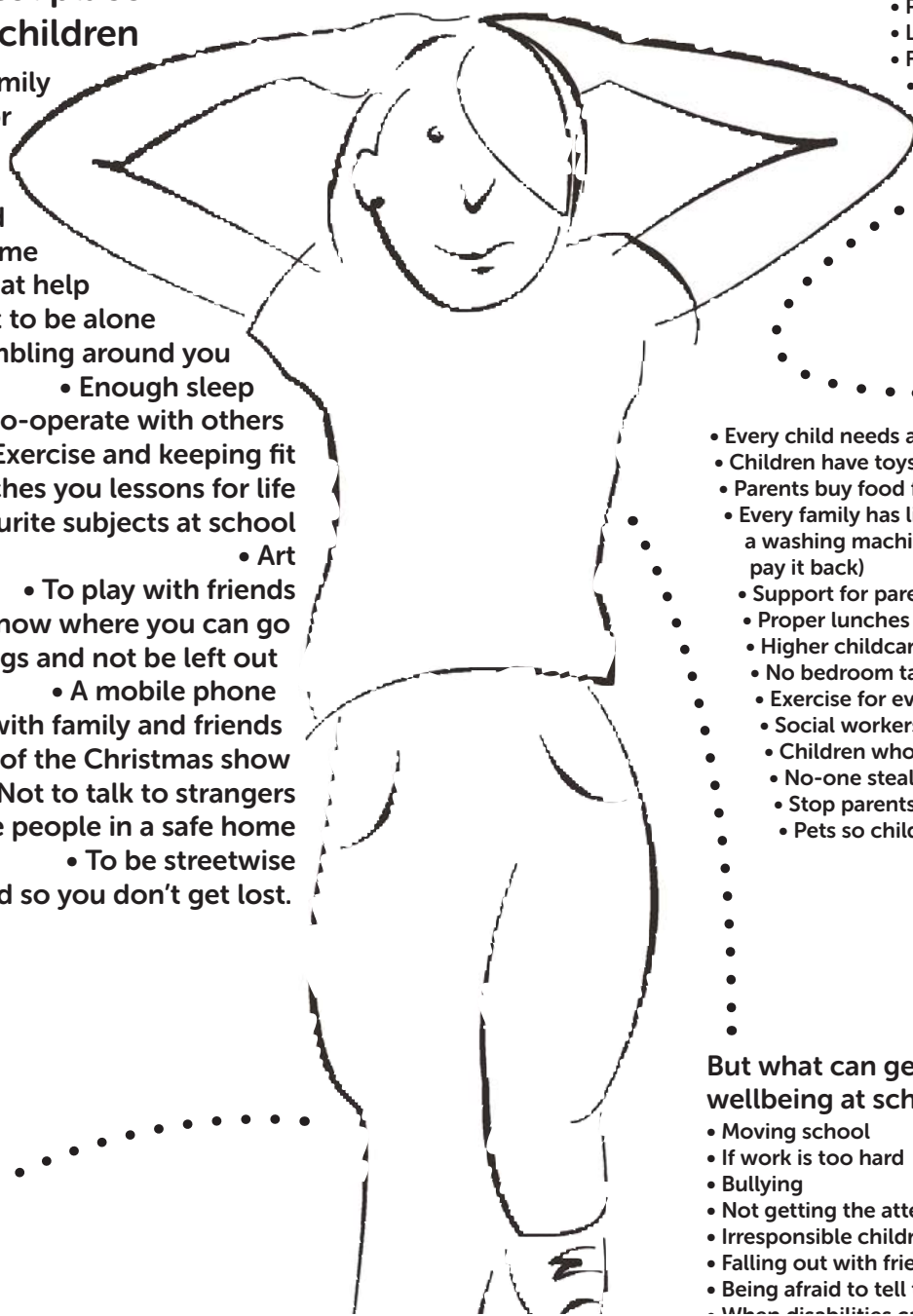
- Having to move
- Being neglected
- Not having clothes
- Having to wash your clothes
- Worrying about living
- Parents arguing
- Parents splitting
- Living in 2 houses
- Feeling scared
- No-one to play with
 - Parents never home
 - Bad parents
 - Second-hand clothes
 - Being forced to do things

So, what can we do to make actions work for wellbeing?

- Every child needs a place to stay and a roof over their head
- Children have toys, computers and things to play with
- Parents buy food for their children
- Every family has life essentials like a washing machine (they might not pay it back)
- Support for parents like parenting classes
- Proper lunches for all children
- Higher childcare benefits and loans
- No bedroom tax
- Exercise for everyone
- Social workers to help children
- Children who listen to their parents
- No-one steals
- Stop parents smoking
- Pets so children can be responsible

But what can get in the way of wellbeing at school?

- Moving school
- If work is too hard
- Bullying
- Not getting the attention you need
- Irresponsible children that others can't play with
- Falling out with friends and feeling lonely
- Being afraid to tell the teacher something
- When disabilities can stop you doing things



Project description: Children and Young People's Understanding of Wellbeing

In a series of workshops, children and young people (target age group 10 to 20 as specified in the Scottish Government understanding of 'adolescence') engaged in discussion about wellbeing. Looking across key domains of home, school/learning and community, participants explored: what wellbeing means to children and young people by considering what they need to be 'healthy, happy and safe'; negative and risk factors, exploring what prevents, undermines or harms wellbeing; and what action can be taken to improve wellbeing. This project was commissioned by Scottish Government Directorate for Education Analytical Services. *The issues and learning identified below come from the children who participated aged 10 to 14 years old.*

Key themes: wellbeing, school, family life, community

Key issues/learning:

- At the heart of children's understanding of wellbeing is the family and life at home. Children need to be loved, to be safe and to have basic needs of a good diet and enough sleep, and to play.
- Relationships outside the home are important and should be characterised by fun and being able to join in.
- Children want a good education, by which they mean the chance to learn, to feel safe and included at school.
- Children want to live in communities and have local and global environments that are clean and safe.
- The key things that get in the way of wellbeing are poverty, feeling scared or being neglected or abused, bullying, and not getting the support or help you need to take part in things.
- Children's wellbeing at home would be enhanced by parents who understand and can provide love and support, every family having what they need to get by, a home life that is not affected by alcohol or violence, and help for families when they need it.
- Children's wellbeing at school would be enhanced by everyone being treated equally and getting the individual support they need, more chances to play and join clubs, by teachers listening to children and helping with any problems or worries (especially bullying), by learning about life not just subjects, and by everyone being praised and rewarded for doing well.
- Children's wellbeing in the community would be enhanced by more things to do, help to make friends and play outdoors, safer and cleaner parks and environments, better and safe public transport, police that help you, opportunities to volunteer, and having someone or some place to go for support.

Consultation on Raising Complaints

Location: Midlothian, South Lanarkshire

Number of children: 14

Project date: 2015



Project description: Consultation on Raising Complaints

In the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the Commissioner's Office has been given new powers to investigate complaints from individual children and young people. These new powers are likely to come into force in April 2016. In preparation for this, the Office has undertaken a mapping exercise exploring the various complaints-handling bodies and regulators in Scotland to assess if and how they take complaints and concerns from children and young people. As part of this mapping process Children's Parliament was commissioned by CYPCS to speak with children to gather their views on the theme of complaints and report their views and ideas.

Key themes: complaints, rights, children's voice

Key issues/learning:

- Children can worry about the repercussions of making a complaint. They don't want to hurt someone's feelings. Sometimes it can feel like it's probably not worth complaining as nothing will change. Rather they think having an opinion and the right to complain should be the norm.
- Complaints should be seen as an effort to make something better; not just a moan. It would be good to learn about how complaints have made a change for the better for people.
- They understand however that a part of their right to have their say should mean the right to complain and have that taken seriously. The right to complain is also seen as a sign that the rights of the child are taken seriously.
- Children feel that adults sometimes trivialise their worries or unhappiness. Some adults have difficulty seeing the world from a child's perspective. This means that any adult with responsibility to seek or hear a child's complaint must be trained and have an understanding of broader children's rights and how to communicate with respect for children.
- Children feel a complaint should be part of a process that addresses problems and finds solutions. They understand that not complaining can leave you feeling frustrated and have a negative effect on how you feel or get involved with things.
- Children want to be able to learn how to make a complaint as this will help them to do so with confidence when they are adults.
- Children identify a range of matters they would like to have the opportunity and confidence to complain about – from personal experiences such as bullying or having something stolen, to wider experiences such as children in care not being treated well or not getting enough support at school for those who need it.
- Children see value in putting things in place to solve problems without having to complain – they like peer mediation, working together to find solutions, adults who step in and help resolve things quickly and the opportunity to campaign with other children.
- Children are more likely to complain if they have the confidence and skills, know where to go or who to speak to (you need to be told this), have trust that the person will listen and take it seriously, and know that something will be done about it.

Children's Parliament National Sitting 2015

Location: Edinburgh; with children from Aberdeen, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Renfrew and South Lanarkshire

Number of children: 75

Project date: 2015



Project description: Children's Parliament National Sitting 2015

On April 1st 2015 children came together with adult decision makers invited from Local Authorities, 3rd sector organisations, NHS Boards, Scottish Government and other public bodies to discuss what we need to do to make Scotland the best place to grow up. Conversations were focused on feeling safe, healthy and happy at home, in school and in the community.

Key themes: wellbeing, family life, school, community, children's voice

Key issues/learning:

- Children have capacity to articulate what they need to flourish and grow, to recognise which needs are and must be rights, to identify what barriers there are to the realisation of rights and what actions might mitigate these obstacles.
- Adult empathy for children's lived experience is welcome, but achieves little in itself, only actions will solve problems and achieve change for the better.
- Some children are not having basic needs and rights met – enough to eat, a healthy diet, a safe, warm home environment, places to play, support for learning, love.
- Having direct conversations with children about these themes and issues was a new experience for many of the adult delegates, highlighting the need to have more frequent and consistent opportunities for decision makers to speak with children about their lives.

Notes:



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